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REPORT

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CITY OF DUBUQUE, IOWA

BY

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

REPORT

ON

The Improvement of the City of Dubuque, Iowa

BY

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON, A. M.
(Civic Adviser)

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

To

Joint Committee representing Dubuque Commercial Club, Civic Division of Dubuque Woman's Club, and Trades and Labor Congress.

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THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CITY OF DUBUQUE, IOWA.

Mr. G. A. Grimm, Chairman; Mrs. H. E. Tredway, Secretary; and Members of the Joint Committee:

You have asked me to make suggestions for the improvement of the City of Dubuque, and to embody these in a preliminary general report. The purpose, as I understand it, is to learn the possibilities of the city from the standpoint of municipal aesthetics.

The conditions that give rise to the problem must be influential in determining its solution. Let us consider first what these are.

CONDITIONS.

Dubuque is a river town, of moderate size as American cities go. For many years it has had a steady and healthy growth, but not a rapid or spectacular one. Therefore it has been one without the accompanying danger of collapse. The city is one of home owners, and of well distributed wealth. There are neither the extremes of poverty nor of riches. It occupies a wondrously beautiful location, nature not only pressing it around with varied and picturesque scenery, but thrusting beauty of bluff or river or view into its very street system, so that throughout the whole city one can hardly ever be forgetful of the natural beauty of the site. With these opportunities, there is in the Dubuque citizenship a naturally park-loving element which is of especially large proportions.

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Dubuque would thus seem to be the city of cities for a comprehensive and beautiful park system. Yet there is not even a park commission, and the "park" possessions of the city are confined to a couple of little triangles at street intersections, and two little city squares—good enough of their kind, with the brightening flowers and the play of light and shade on the tree dotted lawns; but exercising none of the recreative functions of a municipal park system, and with the radius of their aesthetic influence not extending beyond the property directly abutting upon them. They are squares such as any town on the prairie might have, for no beauty of bluff or river has been set aside for the people, and view points have been parted with for what they would bring. The citizen who would enjoy the beauty that should be the right of those who live in Dubuque is compelled to trespass on private property. To these anomalous conditions there must be added, as a handicap to their prompt correction, the fact that the city has not a great deal of money to spend for other than the most commonplace improvement purposes—of which the need is still considerable—and that it is one in which a mortgaging of the future by a long term bond issue for park requirements ought to be undertaken with conservatism.

Obviously a peculiarly interesting and difficult problem is presented. Here is a city in great need of parks; a city exceptionally endowed by nature with opportunities for very beautiful and varied popular pleasure grounds, a city that has practically nothing to start with in the way of park possessions and that must measure its undertakings not by the opportunities offered, but by its capacity to pay for them—to buy lands and then to develop and maintain them. It would be very easy to picture the scenically ideal Dubuque; but such a report would have no practical value. It would be pleasant to select every beautiful spot and gratify its friends by asking that it be made a park; but

to do so would be advice to bankrupt the city. It is necessary to choose and weigh and choose again; to consider the claims of each possible park site, not by itself but in its relation to the whole, to discard sites that other cities would envy; to choose A rather than B, not because one is blind to the beauty of B, or even prefers A to B from the scenic standpoint; but because in the algebraic total of all the factors that go to make or spoil a park site, A fares better than B. At the same time, it is essential in this choosing not to look only to the immediate future:—the recommendations are not to be confined to what could be done this year or next. The suggestions are to give a plan that may be worked toward through many years, with the idea that if at last they are all carried out, the city will then become worthy of its singularly beautiful location, the units of its park system well distributed and making a comprehensive and harmonious whole; while, as a result of the change, the city itself should be not poorer, but more prosperous, bigger, happier and busier than ever.

THE PROBLEM.

Dubuque's natural environment offers three great features: (1) The river; (2) the bluffs, with their river views; (3) the western highlands with their views of rolling country. These three features extend through the whole length of the city from north to south. Over against these features, the park needs of a modern municipality may be grouped under five general heads: (1) Small, ornamental spaces; (2) local, or neighborhood parks, which may be advantageously scenic parks; (3) playgrounds and recreative fields; (4) large country parks that, inviting people out of doors, give to them the greatest possible change from urban conditions; and (5) connecting boulevards or parkways that bind the park units into a system and make possible a pleasant passing from one park to another. The immediate problem in Dubuque is to what extent these

requirements may be best and most practically met from the physical conditions offered. After that, we shall note various other respects in which the city may be improved.

PARK SUGGESTIONS.

Ornamental Spaces

Taking up the park needs of Dubuque in the order in which they were named as the needs of a typical modern municipality, we come first to the small ornamental spaces. In some respects this is the least interesting of all the groups, but there are two factors that give to it dignity. Though primarily of purely local effectiveness, these irregular little spaces may become by sheer force of numbers of general influence, so that if sufficiently numerous they will do much to make a city beautiful, to give it an air of prosperity—a "well dressed" as distinguished from a "down in the heel" aspect; and then to affect the taste of the people themselves, so that house gardens look better, have more flowers, better kept lawns, and better grouping because of the influence of the city's example. The second consideration is that Dubuque, owing to its irregular street system, does offer an exceptionally large number of such opportunities and that they are especially interesting. As yet, only two of these have been availed of; the triangle between West and South Main Street below First, and that at Fifteenth at the side of the High School. The first might well have been made larger by extension northward before the pavement was laid. Even now it should be carried to the fountain, and the fountain itself made worthier the proffered setting.

There are dozens of other similar opportunities. An important one is at the intersection of Eighteenth and Clay streets. Here the city has an engine house, well placed, at the end of a long business street. Behind it and to one side rises the bluff; on the east, a narrow, triangular strip of ground municipally owned is now

given up to billboards, where, in connection with the little fountain, the city at small cost could make a very pretty spot that would really be more conspicuous than costly Washington or Jackson parks. In the broad plaza before this space, there is an old horse-trough. It is clear that at this central and very prominent spot Dubuque has not made the best of its opportunities, and that a remodeling of the space is invited. There is room for a bit of central parking in the plaza, a charming street feature in which Dubuque is totally deficient; and the little fountain at the side of the engine house—suggestive of an Italian shrine even now in its construction—might well be made an invitingly cool and shaded spot.

Other exceedingly important opportunities of similar kind are proffered, for example, at the terminus of the Eighth street car line, and at various Grandview avenue intersections, as at Dodge street, South Dodge, and Delhi road. There is room for a little middle-street park at each of these points. Near the latter, the standpipe of the municipal water works also offers an opportunity for civic embellishment. The far conspicuousness of the pipe, and the fact that the land is already owned by the city, would justify some expenditure for æsthetic effect alone. With your cheap rock, a stone tower on which vines should grow, might be constructed around the tank, and the little space remaining should be beautified with planting.

Now, such improvements as these are only æsthetic in effect. They are not parks in a strict sense, and are called so only because most cities find it convenient and economical to place their care in the hands of the department which is charged with the care of the parks. This department is nominally the park commission, a separate bureau; and until Dubuque has such a commission, especially charged with responsibility for work of this kind and eager to improve every opportunity that is offered, it cannot expect to have that civic beauty which

it ought to have, and which would give to it the aspect of an up-to-date and progressive city. Mere beauty of site is something apart, and does not make up for deficiency here. For the gifts that nature has showered so generously on Dubuque, the city itself deserves, and from strangers receives no credit. The question is what does Dubuque do for itself, and by the answer it is judged as a city. If the larger aspects of the park question were never gone into here, it would still be worth while, for the good name of Dubuque, for the city's greater attractiveness, and for the constant pleasure of its own citizens, as well as for the delight of visitors, that such opportunities as there are be availed of and improved. They involve the purchase of not a single inch of ground; they much more than pay their little cost by the increase in the value of the property abutting upon them, and they are peculiarly needed in a city that is almost unique in its lack on residence streets of broad ornamental strips of lawn between walk and curb.

But in addition to this work, so essential to municipal completeness that it is familiar in cities, there is the chance for Dubuque to do something spectacular, unusual, and individual in the way of ornamental spaces, and at very little cost,—something that will count in giving to the city its own special stamp of beauty. This would be to acquire, not for gardening or other development, but simply that they may be preserved in their own natural beauty, those walls of rock and bluff that are too steep for building purposes, and that now and again, rising above the city streets in rugged picturesqueness of wall or verdure, are so striking a feature of the city landscape. Such bluffs are those on South Locust street and Southern avenue between Railroad avenue and Dodge street; are those on either side of Dodge street itself; are those behind the Franklin school; those on West Eighth street ust above the Wales Hotel, where the billboards now partially hide them ; on Twelfth street at the turn as it goes up the hill ; or at the end of Main street, at Seventeenth.

For the city to acquire title to these bluffs would cost very little, while no money would need to be spent in their development, nor would their withdrawal from private ownership absorb from the market valuable building sites. In nearly every case they cannot be built upon at all, and when it is possible to obtain a foothold, either on the side or in a very shallow lot at the base—for I do not refer to those bluffs well back from the street—there is room only for the shacks which it is to the city's best interests not to have so conspicuously located. In Cincinnati similar steep hillsides have been shorn of their beauty of verdure, and have become so hideous with billboards that, as a result of a recent park plan, the city is now taking measures to buy them at an immediate cost that will be large because of their remunerative utilization; and then to replant them that there may be restored to Cincinnati the beauty that still is yours, and that by so little forethought may forever remain yours—more striking and preciously beautiful the larger the city grows. Do this, and no one can ever criticise Dubuque for lack of "ornamental spaces." You will have something better than can be put into any street gore or vacant space; while part of Dodge street, where the bluffs rise on both sides at once, would be thereby transformed, at this small cost, into the likeness of a stunning parkway.

Enough will be done if the city simply acquires the title to these walls of rock and verdure, but there are possibilities beyond, if it will go so far. Owning these hillsides, the wooden stairways that now climb them with so slipshod and temporary a look, could be gradually supplanted by rock-hewn steps and natural paths, or by steps of rock supplemented with concrete, their borders made beautiful with vine and shrub; and here and there across the face of the bluff a safe trail could be cut to a vantage point with inviting seat. But the great gain would remain the æsthetic.

Local or Neighborhood Parks

The second park need of a modern municipality was described as local or neighborhood parks, which it was said, might advantageously be scenic parks. The advantage of choosing view-points for such parks is that their necessarily small area seems all the smaller when shut in, and is the more difficult advantageously to develop; while if the reserved area can be a view-point, all the country in view from it contributes to its effect on the frequenter, and as his gaze is directed away from the park itself, there is need of very little elaborate treatment there. If he be made physically comfortable, the attractiveness of the view will be the park's sufficient merit. For that reason, it is often cheaper in the end to pay more, if necessary, for a scenic vantage point to be used as a neighborhood park than to purchase an inexpensive tract shut in by city streets, since the latter tract must then be improved at large outlay, and at large cost each year maintained.

Because the neighborhood park is supplementary to the ornamental spaces, it must find its reason in its social use. It must, therefore, be suited to the neighborhood in which it is. Nearly always its function is that of a public room out of doors, where children can play, where mothers can sit to sew and talk, where neighbors can meet in the evenings. Necessarily there is some overlapping of function in these arbitrarily divided groups of parks, and in a small city such as Dubuque where, if the main parks be well distributed, there is always one at no great distance from the house, the need for local parks is not imperative.

The public demand that requires the establishment of them is likely also to designate their location and character, but as a suggestion of what they may be, it may be noted that the little space at the top of the elevators, reserved to the free use of the public and made beautiful, would offer convenient view-points—as would the vacant lot at Wilber avenue and Olive street; that as to the older part of the city, below the bluffs, Jackson

and Washington parks now sufficiently serve the purpose; and that back on the hills and in the long stretches of the city northward, a demand for such provision would not be unreasonable. There are an abundance of suitable sites, and land values are not high. But the whole matter is of local rather than of general significance, and with the city's far more pressing needs, the satisfaction of them may safely wait some years; or for special opportunity—such as that which may be offered at the triangle at the entrance to Linwood cemetery; and for popular demand.

* * *

Playgrounds and recreative fields are a special form of local or neighborhood parks. Of all the kinds of park development, the children's playground is just now the most popular elsewhere, and is receiving the most attention. It is very elaborately fitted up, with sand-piles and a wading-pool for little children, with outdoor gymnastic apparatus for older boys and girls, with provision for basket ball and other games, with a "field house" containing toilet facilities, dressing rooms, a refreshment stand, books and magazines from the library, and a playroom for rainy days. The function of the playground is well illustrated, indeed, by the fact there must always be one or two "play-directors" on the ground, and that the conduct of the place is coming to be quite generally transferred from the park commission to the board of education, for in the long summer months it is designed to supplement the school work, keeping the children off the streets, and often affording elementary instruction in industrial handicraft.

Playgrounds And Recreative Fields

The playground as thus developed is by no means confined in its influence to the congested populations of large cities. But it is usually started in city or town by private philanthropy, and in Dubuque, with its more urgent needs, the municipal provision of playgrounds—as in the case of the other local parks—might, I think, properly be delayed for the present. In going around

the city, my attention has been called to a level tract a couple of blocks long between Sanford and Twenty-second, Jackson and Washington streets, as a possible park site. I do not recommend that use of it, but if it were desired to establish a playground such as I have described, this site would seem to me well adapted for the purpose, both in itself and in the location. But half of the tract would be amply large.

The recreative field is an interesting and wholly legitimate park development for the modern industrial city. Its object is to furnish a place where the employes of shops and factories can have healthy and enjoyable exercise in the open air. It must therefore be located near the work shops, and it requires very little development—simply a large even tract, laid out with base ball diamonds, cricket fields, etc. In locating it a safe rule is to look for the field already and informally used for these purposes. I find such a field near the Great Western shops, on the car lines, and in every way well adapted to its purpose. Large employers of labor in Dubuque could not do many more appropriate things for the city than to purchase this or some similar tract —there is one on the near side of Peru road that might do as well, though it lacks the fine trees and handsome bluff—and present it to the municipality, to be maintained as a playfield for operatives.

* * *

Summary of Smaller Park Needs

Before we take up the urgent matter of large parks, it may be well to review the recommendations regarding the smaller parks, so that knowing just how much or how little Dubuque ought to do for them, we may take care not to ask too much of the city in respect to larger reservations. Recapitulating then, under the head of "Ornamental Spaces" it has been advised that the city improve certain street intersections—waste ground already municipally owned, and that it acquire title to the walls of rock and steepest hillsides. These should

cost very little to buy and some of them should be given. No development of those tracts is immediately advocated. Under the head of "Local or Neighborhood Parks," some advantageous sites were noted; but the present need was stated to be "not imperative," if there shall be well distributed large parks. And as to "Playgrounds and Recreation Fields," these were described as of such philanthropic excellence that private means might well supply them. In short, this report has as yet asked so little of Dubuque as a municipality that such resources as are available for the satisfaction of park needs have been practically uncalled upon, in spite of the considerable program of improvement which is outlined.

* * *

The Large Parks

Coming now to large parks, we reach the question most urgent and of most popular interest in the present study of the improvement possibilities of Dubuque. The city's need of such parks is so generally recognized that there is happily no necessity for arguing the point here. Our whole attention may be given to the difficult and very important problems concerning their character and location.

In the science of modern city building, the following are accepted principles: (1) A city should have at least one large park, so extensive in itself and in the vistas it affords as to seem a bit of country, thus presenting to tired city dwellers the greatest possible urban contrast. (2) Two or more such parks, so separated as to serve different parts of the town, are more effective than one park of double the size. (3) If there can be three or more such parks, they should present contrasts of scenery. (4) Cities that are not confined to one public pleasure ground of this character should distribute the reservations as widely as may be. (5) The reservations should be located on land that is not of much importance, or at least not of equal importance, for other purposes; or where their presence will so benefit other

property that the increase in the taxable value of the latter will wholly or partially compensate for the expenditure for park purposes. (6) Experience has shown the exceeding advisability of securing one or more large public reservations at what is now a long distance from town—this tract not to be expensively improved, but to be held as a picnic ground where people may go for the day, until the city's growth demands its more intensive use.

I have enunciated these principles in order that they may be a guide in choosing the larger park sites of Dubuque, since Dubuque is so wonderfully situated that instead of having one or two perfectly obvious park sites, choice must be made from a dozen or more.

Of these the one that seemed most prominently before the public on my arrival was Ham's island, in the river. There is to be said in its favor that it is land now of very little use for other purposes and inexpensive, that it presents a large river frontage, and that Lake Peosta, which separates it from the city, is already municipal property. From various sources, on the evening of my arrival, before I had seen the island or any other part of the city, I was asked to consider the possibility of making there such a park as Belle Isle at Detroit—a possibility that had at once occurred to me. On investigation, however, I find the conditions absolutely dissimilar. (1) While Detroit had no other park site, Dubuque has many; (2) Detroit with its large population was able to make enormous expenditures for development; and (3) the Detroit river is of constant level, while here there may be fifteen feet between low water and high water, and when the river is high the entire island is flooded. Belle Isle, in short, has no value as establishing a precedent of what could be done at Ham's island. Furthermore, the mere fact that there is an island lying opposite part of Dubuque establishes no convincing argument for placing a park upon it. Boston, which has the most complete park system

in the country, including very popular water front reservations, has made no such use of any of the islands in the harbor, attractive as is the ceaseless panorama of shipping which is visible from them. Nor has New York, with the large investments it is now making in water front parks, turned to Blackwell's Island or to Staten Island. When there is a choice between a mainland and an island park site, there is no presumption in the island's favor.

There are also various objections to this particular island's use. It is now exceedingly inaccessible. It would be necessary to construct a bridge, and for this permission would have to be obtained from private interests which have navigable rights in the lake. The permission may be withheld, but if it were obtained, it would be necessary to build a bridge high, and, as a park approach, to give to it some grace—facts that would make it more costly than the complete development of a better tract would be. Then, soon after the bridge is built, the lake, from present indications, will have filled up, unless disfiguring and expensive dredging be constantly carried on. Much of the island itself is a tangle of willows, and its several hundred acres will have to be raised many feet before any park development can be given to it. This is a large and costly work, and it would be many years before the people of Dubuque would have their park. Finally, assuming that after years of effort and expense a park were created on the island, there would be gained only one long, low, level stretch, without variety, without a view, far removed from much of the residence district, and enhancing the taxable value of no property. Dubuque's good fortune affords other and better opportunities than this.

My own impression is that the value of the island is not likely to increase for many years, but as it certainly can now be bought cheaply, and the filling would take a long time, there would be no objection to the purchase of the land—if there be faith that Dubuque is

to have a much larger future population—and the gradual raising of the level on some selected portion. But to concentrate the city's park efforts on this island, or to *allow expenditures there seriously to interfere with park development from which immediate results can be obtained, would be, I think, exceedingly unwise and short-sighted.* As a speculation, Ham's Island may be bought and a little money spent on it, but as a park investment, I urge that the city look elsewhere.

With respect to other locations, there is, beginning at the north, in Eagle Point an extraordinarily noble site, the great wall of rock rising sheer from almost the river's edge and affording superb views up and down the stream. The street cars now go to the foot of a ravine, whence an easy ascent can be made, if one does not care to climb the more abrupt but by no means difficult sides. By good fortune, too, only a few feet of Lincoln avenue, parallel to Rhomberg, has yet been cut into the hill. By continuing this, but making it follow the contour, and leading it gradually up the hillside, with its charming views, and then back of the hill by way of the ravine—all of which could be done at less cost than cutting a level street—a park drive out of Seventh avenue, a short block from Rhomberg, can lead to a viewpoint on the summit of the bluff. From further along on Seventh avenue, the hill can be reached from behind at no severe grade, so affording a pleasant loop drive. The rolling upland that forms the back of the bluff is covered with an oak grove, already sufficiently thinned for park purposes, while such a park as this demands no elaborate development of planting. Its own wild beauty and stunning view, when roads and paths have given it accessibility, would make it a park of which any city in the world might well be proud. Let this go for building sites or an institution, and the citizens of Dubuque will never cease to regret the lost opportunity; secure it, and the wisdom of the mayor and aldermen responsible therefor will forever be chronicled in the city's history.

Coming south into town, the next great view point unbuilt upon and of more than neighborhood park dimensions is Kelly's Bluff. This is in the heart of the city. Rising precipitously on the east, its bluffs are among those to which I have urged that the city take title, that they may be always preserved in their beauty; on the south the green hillside slopes down to Dodge Street, not so steeply that it could not be made beautiful as a park, and its summit reached from there by paths; and on the north and west the table land is on a level with the adjacent street system, so that on those sides there is no difficulty in walking or driving upon it. There is in Dubuque no other unoccupied height of such area so accessible and with so splendid a view—a view that there is no need to describe to Dubuque citizens. To have this in the very center of the city, and Eagle Point as a wilder and more strictly country park, would be for Dubuque to have turned to advantage its great opportunities—to have restored to the people the wonderful heritage of river views which is rightfully theirs, since they live in Dubuque. No more public spirited act could be done than to make readily practicable the acquirement of this plat by the city. When acquired this tract and Eagle Point could be at once thrown open and the public begin to enjoy them, as they could not for years the island; there would be an immediate, visible and immensely popular return for the money invested, and Dubuque would instantly have parks, and not only parks that would mean much in enjoyment to its citizens but that would make the city famous. And how little it all would cost! Indeed, the Kelly's Bluff park would largely pay for itself in the enhancement in value of nearby property.

Nothing could compensate for the loss of these two park sites, and it is obvious that no time should be lost in the effort to gain them. Happily the city has the power of condemnation in the purchase of park areas, and in the case of Eagle Point it probably is only a matter

of money. If, through other considerations, Kelly's Bluff cannot be obtained, there would still remain—not as an equivalent, but as an alternative resource—the large vacant plat on the east side of Grandview avenue, just before one reaches the Mother House. The view here is about as good as from the Mother House grounds, and the site at the south end of the city would well balance Eagle Point; but its relative inaccessibility as compared to Kelly's Bluff, its smaller area, less varied and advantageous contour, makes it much inferior to the latter as a park site. However, it is one that nearly any other city in the country would give many thousands of dollars to secure. That it should be mentioned as a second choice shows how extraordinary is the opportunity offered by Kelly's Bluff.

At the river level two factors make park location difficult. One, and the more serious, which was also operative in the case of the island, is the great fluctuation in the river level. The other is the difficulty of finding sites not already seized for strictly utilitarian purposes. On my way to Dubuque I happened to read what Mr. Dooley says of the railroads in Chicago, and I found his point only too well illustrated here. He is asking Hennissey: "Ye know the Illinye Centhral? Why do I ask? Iv coorse ye know it. 'Tis wan iv th' institutions iv our fair city. It has a rockin' chair on our front stoop. Its thracks are our lawn." Then he added: "Whin an American city is blessed be hiven with a site alongside iv th' shinin' ocean, th' sparklin' lake or the purlin' river, it shows its gratichood to hiven be givin' the site to a glue facthry, a lumber yard, or a railroad." This is exactly what Dubuque has done. But there are still some possibilities available. Of the broad strip, one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet wide, which the city owns around the Ice Harbor and along the river edge to the south of it, I shall speak further on. For a large park at river level, I find the most interesting immediate possibility at Rafferty slough,

and the sloughs extending south from there to the river below Mount Carmel road. By good fortune a considerable part of Rafferty slough is already city property. Fed by springs, the water does not stagnate, and there is offered here, within a couple of blocks of the business section of the city and almost on a car line, a site capable of as picturesque, beautiful and useful development as any one could ask. On the west, the wooded slopes of Mount Carmel hill and the great bluff that frowns over Southern avenue and South Locust street make a natural frame of exquisite beauty. To the east, the eye, traveling over the flat area with its railroad tracks, looks to the Mississippi and the hills beyond. Developed at slight expenditure into a water park, with skating in winter and boating in summer, and girdled as it is partially even now with drives, this park can well supplement the two municipal pleasure grounds on the bluffs. Nothing could be easier than to make its little banks beautiful with planting, and to create here, in a small fraction of the time that the island would require and at a very small part of the cost of raising and developing the island, such a water park as has been dreamed of there—but much more accessible. If one will walk along South Locust street and Southern avenue, or along Railroad avenue, and will go up Mount Carmel road to overlook the plat, one will see without need of argument how beautiful and useful a natural park this is. Then in fancy let him add to it the two suggested elevated parks with their great views, and ask himself whether Dubuque would not thus be well provided, and at small cost, with a system of parks, varied, typically individualistic, well distributed and accessible, fitted to restore to the people the enjoyment of the natural beauty of their city's site.

As to the large country reservation, to be set aside as a strictly rural park supplementary to these municipal parks, the lower Catfish, the bluff on which is Dubuque's grave, and the broad flat space extending to Horseshoe

bluffs, seem to me to furnish the ideal location. The historic interest of the spot, the proper incentive which grave and tower offer to a visit and to the steep climb to the top, the lovely natural boundaries of the park, the river trip, the large play space offered by the flat area, the romantic scenery of the Catfish with its invitation to boating, the delightful picnic grounds in the timber on either side, all combine to make this an appropriate spot for a city's rural park. The one great objection is inaccessibility, but this is not through remoteness, for it is only two miles from the business part of the city. If the tract were made a park, however, the Milwaukee road would doubtless be quick enough to put in a suburban station, and this railroad service could be supplemented during the season by a line of public launches. At a five, or even ten, cent fare these would offer so pleasant a way of going that the concession would doubtless bring in some revenue to the park commission. As for driving, it would seem that by an extension of Mount Carmel road a direct approach at reasonable gradient could be established.

* * *

Connecting Boulevards And Parkways

Isolated park units, however excellent in themselves and as a group, do not constitute a system until they are united by drives. In the ideally planned city, these would make a complete girdle and would be an exceedingly important factor in the city's beautification.

The good fortune of Dubuque, in its wonderfully varied and beautiful site, will stand it in as good stead in the construction of these connecting drives as in the establishment of parks. For while most cities have to trust to the development of the street itself for the attractiveness of boulevard and parkway, here the topography will give to selected streets interest, variety and charm as a circle of scenic drives, the function of the development bestowed on them being then simply to establish their character as belonging to the park system.

Beginning at the Ice Harbor, as a conveniently central point, the city owns on the south bank of it a broad strip not yet parted with for other purposes. This should be planted with a double row of trees, and on the water side a promenade should be laid out, with frequent incandescent lights, and with seats beneath the trees where one can sit to watch the shimmering waters and the life of the little harbor, while incidentally there will thus be established a pleasant entrance to the city for the passengers by boat. Back of the promenade, which may well be twenty feet in width, with a strip of greensward twenty feet broad between it and the road, should be the drive, the second row of trees on its southern side. The drive, extending to the river, should there turn south,—as it still can do on city property—to Railroad avenue. Leaving the river at that point and turning westward, it will enter in a few hundred feet the park to be made at Rafferty slough, and crossing its pretty lake will reach Mount Carmel avenue. By raising the lower end of this, the hard grade can be considerably lessened, and there will be offered a beautiful parkway, climbing the wooded bluff, with long vistas up and down the majestic river, and views to the park below and into the wild growth on either side. Thus it will be a varied and parklike drive from the beginning of the Ice Harbor to Herron Place, and there it will join the park to be secured at the north of the Mother House—if Kelly's bluff be not obtained; and in any case will join Grandview avenue, with its long peaceful views to the westward hills.

For accomplishing this result, existing highways only need to be used; the development along the river and the Ice Harbor will serve a double purpose, giving pleasure to those who walk as well as to those who drive; across Rafferty slough the making of the park will give all the development desired, and the drive up Mount Carmel has been made beautiful by nature. The steep slope from the road to the sloughs would of course be added to the park takings.

Grandview avenue on the brow of the hill, with its views over the broad tranquil valley and to the blue hills beyond, has the making of a very stunning boulevard. To this purpose it would be economy for the city to give to it that elaborate development for which its hundred feet of width now so sorely calls—and that hundred feet should be made uniform. The curb line has been placed, I understand, twenty feet from the lot line; but as few curbs have yet been laid I would rather have it twenty-five feet from the lot line. Then the space should be laid off as follows: Lot line to walk, five feet; walk, five feet; street lawn, between walk and curb, fifteen feet; roadway, fifty feet. In the broad strip of parking between walk and curb trees should be planted by the city—that they may be placed in orderly fashion, all of one kind, equi-distant, in formal row. They should be trimmed high, so as not to break the views; and the poles and wires should be taken off of this one show street of Dubuque. Side-parking, it seems to me, is preferable here to center-parking, because the interest of the street is in its distant views. To have the strip of parking in the middle would be to invite attention only to the avenue; to have it at the side invites the eye to look toward the view. Incidentally it will make the little ornamental spaces, which I have proposed for some of the intersections, more interesting because of their variety. Thus developed there can be no doubt that there would be a demand for house sites on Grandview avenue which would so increase the assessable value of abutting property as to more than repay the city for the expenditure. In other words, the improvement can be made for nothing. I hope the street cars may be kept off of Grandview avenue.

By proceeding from Grandview avenue to Seminary street, and thence east on that, and down by the Madison street hill, the half circle around the city will have been completed. Thence by Garfield and Rhomberg avenues it will be a pleasant drive to Eagle Point

and the park to be established there. Thus with the exception of the possible park at Kelly's bluff, which can be approached by excellent residential streets, all the large municipal parks will be united by driveways and boulevards into a system. Of course in the case of Seminary street, Garfield and Rhomberg avenues, no elaborate development is possible; but these in one way and another are attractive streets already, and may well serve as links of the system.

* * *

Counting The Cost

It is clear that these plans contemplate a considerable park expenditure by the city of Dubuque. But to the modern city, parks are as much an essential as are sewers, pavements, lights, or police and fire protection. They are not subjects for argument or for sentiment; they are recognized municipal necessities. You in Dubuque appreciate this, and have made up your minds that you must have parks. The only question is how completely shall you go into the matter, and where shall the parks be situated.

It is my belief, as I have stated, that the island would be in the end a costly, laborious and time-taking park proposition, and that the immediate and serious park investment of the city should be in the other mentioned sites, where the returns will be substantial and immediate. It is my further impression that it should be possible to obtain a pretty complete park system, as outlined in this report, at no greater aggregate cost than would be involved in the development of the island and its adequate connection with the city. As to whether this degree of expense is justifiable, I would state that the plan is not an extravagant but a conservative one for a growing municipality; though there might properly have been, if necessary, a degree of extravagance about it, since with cities as with men, obligation goes with opportunity. The city so picturesquely located as is Dubuque may well find it to its

advantage to make the most of the talent it so pre-eminently possesses. That a great deal here ought to be done promptly is, perhaps, unfortunate. But the risk in waiting is very serious. The park commission should be obtained and it should at once acquire the sites. Those here described are so advantageous in their present condition that development could be deliberate if once the land were safely secured.

For the purchase of the land two courses of action are available—a park tax or a bond issue. Personally, I favor the latter, leaving the proceeds of the former for use in the development and maintenance. A bond issue for park lands is justifiable because the future will benefit at least as much as the present from the parks, because the land is security for the bonds, and because while nearly all other property represented by city bond issues—as water works, sewers, schools and other public structures—depreciate in value with the lapse of time, the value of the parks steadily increases. I know of no better or more legitimate fiscal operation for a city, quite apart from the paramount sociological and æsthetic benefit. Furthermore, parks pay financially. Let me give briefly the results of an investigation which I made a few weeks ago on this point :

In Louisville, where there is a fine park system, more than two million dollars having been expended on it, D. F. Murphy, a former city assessor, estimates the city's direct money profit by the transaction at $1,600,000. Figuring out, by careful watchfulness from year to year, the amount of increased taxable values that have resulted from the parks, he gets the sum of $20,000,000. At the present annual assessment of $1.86 that gives an increased annual income as a result of the parks of $372,000. Going back only ten years, this would aggregate $3,720,000, from which, deducting the $2,070,000 expended since the system was started, he gets the direct money profit of more than $1,600,000 in ten years. Of course, there are incidental profits besides. In larger

cities, as New York, Chicago and Boston, figures show much more amazing results, for there the abutting land often "doubles and even quadruples in value at once" when a park is established. I quote the words from W. H. Harmon, secretary of the Chicago Park Department. But if the reports of larger cities be not convincing, let me quote the park report for 1907 of Madison, Wis., a neighboring city: The president's report says: "There is now being turned into the city treasury in increased taxes, by reason of this (park) work, on the basis of the tax rate of last year, not less than $28,000, and the greatest financial benefit from the establishment of our drives, parks, and playgrounds has not yet come to the city. Yet even now the city is receiving not less than $20,000 annually in excess of the amount expended to maintain the parks each year." But, of course, parks are worth while in themselves, in the pleasure and physical benefit which they give to the community, apart from their profits.

OTHER IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS.

While Dubuque's need of an adequate park system is so serious that any report on the improvement of the city must place there its principal stress, yet I should feel myself remiss in my duty if I did not make note of various other things that might be done to enhance the city's attractiveness and make it a better place in which to work and to live. These as distinguished from questions of park improvement may be classed as questions of municipal improvement. They have mainly to do with the streets.

Main street, considered as the leading business thoroughfare of a growing city, is too narrow. If the population of Dubuque increases considerably, the thoroughfare will be a congested one ; yet its widening is a

Haussmannizing process not to be seriously considered. But there is one simple step which can be taken, and which will notably increase the street's carrying capacity and at the same time add in a measure to its dignity. The unnecessary sidewalk obstructions—very many in number and in kind—can be removed. For this there is already sufficient authority in Chapter 33 of the Revised City Ordinances. There is need only that the regulations be enforced; and if they are enforced universally, hardship will be imposed upon no one.

Various other streets have too wide a roadway, though this error is less common in Dubuque than in most cities of its size. The streets of a city have as varied functions as the rooms of a house. Nevertheless in the old planning of cities, all parallel streets in a certain tract were given uniform width, regardless of the function they had to perform in the city's life, regardless of the volume of traffic they would carry or of the character of the buildings at their sides. Yet no one would think of giving the same dimensions to all the rooms of his house.

A good illustration is offered by the streets that run east and west to the bluffs. Fourteenth and Eighth, which must be always arterial, because carried up the valleys, are given no greater width than are the streets between them, although these stop abruptly at the hillside, only two short blocks from Main street. If we cannot change the width of the short streets, at least we need not in their development perpetuate the foolish blunder. For example, in paving Eleventh street, it was a bit of unjustifiable extravagance to pave the full width of the road. There was not only waste in paving a wider expanse than was necessary, but there was actual loss in attractiveness and comfort. A roadway twenty-six feet wide here would have taken care of all the traffic that the street will be asked to carry. That would have left nineteen feet on each side, and of that nineteen there should have been one foot of greensward between walk

and lot line, then a six-foot walk, and then twelve feet of turf between walk and curb. This would have made a beautiful street; to the eye, it would have carried down to Main street the ornamental parking at the side of the elevator, and it would have given to the Library a much needed setting. And aside from these particular advantages there would have been those common on all streets where side parking is possible, viz: a saving of expense in construction and in subsequent maintenance, a lessening of dust and noise, a saving of pedestrians from the spattering of mud, an apparent setting back of the building line, and the seeming addition of just that much to the front lawns.

I have thought it worth while to dwell with some pains on this instance, for considering Eleventh street as an example, the discussion is not academic. The like opportunity may arise at any time on a similar street. In fact, Second street is so striking a case that I recommend parking here immediately without waiting for paving. Like Eleventh street second terminates at the bluff, two short blocks from Main, but for some reason there was given to it an extra width, so that it is eighty-six feet wide, as compared with the sixty-four of the arterial streets. Needless to say, very little of the expanse of roadway is used. It happens, too, that finely situated at the head of this street is the Cathedral, which stands for so much to many of Dubuque's citizens that it would be an appropriate act, as well as one making for the enhancement of the city's attractiveness, to give to it that significance and dignity of setting which would be given—with an actual economy —by transforming Second street from Main to its portal into a parklike approach. My advice would be a forty foot road, thus leaving twenty-three feet on each side for walk and parking. The twenty-three feet I would divide as follows: From lot line to walk, one foot; walk, ten feet; parking—turf from walk to curb—twelve feet. I have recommended here an especially

wide roadway and wide walk so as to take care of the dispersing congregations.

On Rhomberg avenue, to which in my plan I give special significance as a park connection, there is for some distance a fine double row of elms. These have now grown to such size and are so well worth saving in their beauty that they ought to be thinned out so that the trees which are left may be given opportunity to develop. Many persons have great reluctance to authorize removal of a tree; but a congestion of trees, so that they are starved and cramped, is only a little less bad than a huddling of human beings into tenements.

The work here, and the tree planting which I have already suggested for Grandview avenue, ought to be done by a properly constituted official authority, which will not only act with expert knowledge but with that regard for the interests of the whole street—which are also the interests of the city—as distinguished from the individual lot owner's point of view. And Grandview and Rhomberg avenues are only two streets out of the whole city, on all the streets of which tree care and tree planting should be systematic and scientific if Dubuque is to realize all its possibilities for beauty. To gain this result there may be created the office of city forester, in which a competent man can by degrees accomplish much with a comparatively small annual appropriation; or the street trees can be put in charge of the park commission, when that body has been secured. In the latter case the park board would employ the forester and should be given a separate appropriation expressly for street tree work.

Further considering the streets as a whole, there should be a better rounding of curbs at the corners. The radius of the present curve is so short that the arc has neither beauty nor utility. A long sweeping curve at the corners will add much to the comeliness of the street, and will greatly facilitate driving.

On all the business streets, and as rapidly as practicable on the residence streets, light standards should be substituted for the present flimsy method of hanging electric lights from wires. Various artistic standards are on the market at little or no higher price than those designed without thought of appearance. A very little care in the selection of the standards will give satisfactory results.

Street name signs are also very much needed throughout Dubuque.

Cans for the reception of street waste and rubbish are good things, but cans plastered with signs are about as much of an eye-sore on the public way as would be the rubbish itself. I do not know what arrangement tempted the granting of permission to cover these street cans with signs. If no permission was given they should at once be freed from the advertisements; if financial considerations persuaded a granting of permission let there be a reflection that—if the signs pay for the cans —they also negative practically the whole good of the cans. I do not believe that Dubuque is so poor or so mean that it cannot keep the rubbish from the outside of its rubbish receptacles. A municipality that has awakened to high ideals of civic beauty, and looks for a beautiful park system, needs only to have its attention called to the present condition of the street cans.

The alleys of Dubuque are so broad and so conspicuous that they may properly be considered under the head of streets. Their dirtiness is appalling. For its alleys, Dubuque needs one of those general cleaning-up days that have been so popular throughout the west for the last year, and after that a system of much more frequent regular collection.

With regard to the landscape development of the city's present little squares and triangles, I shall say nothing. Speaking generally, the effects are pretty good, and the problem is one that will naturally be taken

up by the park commission. But I may suggest that the pipes for drinking water are susceptible of worthier treatment than at present.

The school yards also, which are exceptional in their size and the opportunity they offer for good work, require no word of mine, as I understand that a very competent authority has already made plans for them.

The one big thing for Dubuque to work for, after the park and street improvements—and in its importance it is comparable to them—is the abolition of grade crossings by the railroads, and then, as an incident of the reconstruction necessary, the erection of a union railroad station. The abolition of the grade crossings will be a large and costly work, but it is one of exceeding moment to Dubuque, and one in the expense of which the railroads will share. This they can be compelled to do, if compulsion is necessary; but the change would be so much to their own interest, in the facilitation of traffic, in lessening the cost of maintenance—doing away with gates and flagmen—in relief from damage actions for death and injury, and in economy and convenience of administration, through having one station instead of four separate ones, that the roads will probably be found willing to co-operate with the municipality if properly approached. There should be appointed to take up this matter a joint committee representative of the city and of the different roads. The opportunity for an economical elevation of tracks is exceptionally favorable in Dubuque, and convenient sites for the union station are at hand, while there are so many big roads to share the cost of the improvement that a requirement of grade crossing abolition would work hardship upon none of them. As for the city, it would gain immensely by this improvement. The one adequate union station, instead of the four little village-like stations, would at once transform the impression it must make upon travelers, from that of a little town to that of a city. The elevation of the tracks would not only mean a saving of

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life and limb, and of considerable time for city traffic, but in so doing it would render the Ice Harbor landings much safer and pleasanter of approach, and would vastly increase the accessibility and usefulness of the suggested harbor and river-front drive and promenade.

CONCLUSION.

With these three distinct groups of effort: (1) For the creation of a park system; (2) For the improvement of the streets in various ways; and (3) For the abolition of grade crossings and the establishment of a union station, Dubuque will be transformed into a modern city—beautiful, with a beauty characteristic of its picturesque location, more orderly of aspect, and more convenient,—in short, better to visit, and better to live in and to call one's home. As such a city it will attract people to itself, for with the present ease of communication, population has a fluid character, flowing to the points where it finds most to please it. People make business, and I believe the future of Dubuque, in the present keen rivalry of cities, depends more upon the city's immediate grasp of its opportunities for municipal improvement, not in a picayune way, but in a broadly comprehensive and daring way, than upon any other factor. The very circumstance that this report has been called for shows that the right spirit is stirring in the municipality, and gives the promise that the situation is recognized and will be worthily met, as clearly it can be at no staggering expense.

The change which I dare to forsee in the attitude of Dubuque must be in the hearts of individual citizens before it manifests itself in the community. The construction of large private places—by which I mean not the erection of fine houses but the putting of houses in large grounds, the development of these grounds, and the treasuring of view points, will be one expression of it. This will line Grandview avenue, for example, with

handsome private grounds, thus doing much by private means for the embellishment of the city. The end will be hastened by the worthier municipal development of the street. And the new individual spirit will show itself in gifts to the city. There is no finer thing for a rich man to do than by gift to make recognition of the community where he has gained his wealth. It is a proud fact in the history of American municipalities that much of their parks and connecting driveways, and much of their aesthetic embellishment, are the gifts of citizens. Finally, and most important of all, the new sentiment will show itself in the public spirit of individuals, in that self-sacrifice that freely gives of time and effort for the common good. That expression I have found already evident, in an inspiringly large measure, in the members of the Joint Committee, which I have the honor to serve. In the thing itself, but especially in its promise for Dubuque, all who love the city must rejoice.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON.

October 1st, 1907.

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